

Labour to the desirability of improving communication and co-operation so as to facilitate the peaceful settlement of these matters. In this regard I anticipate concrete action during this session.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my general satisfaction with the Speech from the Throne. I look forward to the early implementation of the many progressive programs it forecasts, not only for agriculture but for all this great Canada of ours.

**Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin):** Mr. Speaker, as a newcomer to this house I have listened over the past few days to the various views expressed by hon. members on a wide variety of subjects. I find that while I am not entirely in agreement with much that has been said, I can subscribe wholeheartedly to one sentiment that appears to be universally shared, namely, the pride and pleasure of this house in the re-election of Your Honour as Speaker. I would like to add my congratulations to you, to your new deputy and to all those who have been appointed to various tasks in this new parliament as well as to the mover (Mr. Corbin) and the seconder (Mr. Marchand) of the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I congratulate the mover and the seconder, but at the same time I feel sorry that they had to work so valiantly in support of such a poor thing as this Speech from the Throne.

• (9:00 p.m.)

If it truly represents the legislative plans of this government, then I can only describe it as disappointing and disillusioning. It will be particularly so to the people of my riding of Dauphin where agriculture is such a vital factor. As the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Muir) pointed out in the house the other day, 60 per cent of prairie residents are directly or indirectly dependent upon the grain industry.

The Speech from the Throne, as a reflection of government plans, was woefully deficient in the area of agriculture. At a time when there are great and urgent problems in agriculture, particularly in the wheat sector, this government appears to be blissfully unaware of them: Merely adjusting farm credit upward or tinkering with existing programs falls far short of what is needed at this time.

While our attitude to the whole agricultural industry in Canada needs complete rethinking and a radical and entirely new approach, the truly pressing problem lies in the area of

*The Address—Mr. Ritchie*

wheat production. Canada's wheat channels today are choked with a tremendous carry-over. Piling up behind this is another bumper crop. By the time the current harvest is completed, this country will be faced with a disposable amount of wheat totaling well in excess of one billion bushels—some estimates place this figure at one and a quarter billion bushels.

What are the prospects of disposing of this huge amount of wheat? From the best available reports, the prospects are dim. Canada is caught between the inexorable pressure of wheat production and the increasing constriction imposed by dwindling foreign sales. When we consider that only about 10 per cent of our wheat production is absorbed by the domestic market, it can easily be seen what even the smallest dwindling of sales abroad can mean.

It is true that the wheat picture has been complicated by the crippling two-months strike of the grain handlers at lakehead ports, by unnaturally wet weather in the west, particularly in Manitoba, and by frost and other factors. These things will increasingly in the months ahead make much more difficult the movement of wheat from the farms to the elevators, to the terminals and to the final shipping ports. But these are temporary difficulties that have been experienced and overcome in the past.

What is much more serious and what is much more difficult to solve is the problem of maintaining the flow of wheat through sales to foreign customers. The whole wheat marketing picture has changed and is changing. The international wheat picture is chaotic. If we cannot adjust to changing circumstances, Canada is going to be left with her wheat with disastrous results, not only to the wheat producing areas but to the Canadian economy as a whole.

Right now Canada's traditional wheat export channel is like a garden hose in which the water has been fully turned on but on which the nozzle has been turned until the jet has been reduced to a fine spray. The restriction in this case is our inability to sell.

What is the situation in the world market place? For almost all of last year the uncontrolled buying and selling of wheat which followed the lapsing of the old international wheat agreement and the regulations imposed by the new international cereals agreement brought wide scale price cutting, cutthroat competition and the necessity of imposing